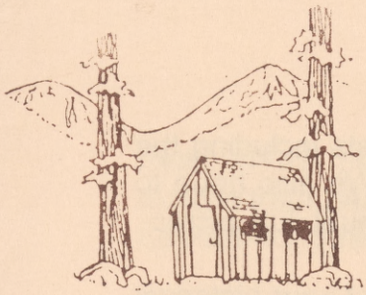

Mineral King Chronicle

Volume 7 **Number 1**

Newsletter of the Mineral King Preservation Society
Spring 1993

1992: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The year 1992 marked several milestones in the annals of the Mineral King Preservation Society (MKPS). Among the many highlights were the Mining History Association (MHA) Conference in Boise, Idaho, the Sixth Annual Picnic in the Park, and another round of research relating to the proposed Mineral King Historic District.

The Third Annual Mining History Association Conference

The MHA conference was held on the campus of Boise State University during June 4-6, 1992. It also included a National Park Service (NPS) -sponsored workshop on Historic Landscape. The workshop, conducted by NPS preservation staff from several regional offices, was outstanding. The topics were particularly relevant to the management of Mineral King cultural resources.

More than 200 scholars, professionals, historical society members, and mining history fans attended the three day conference. Ora Kay Peterson (Executive Director) and John Elliott (Historian) represented MKPS. John was privileged to be a speaker and presented the Mineral King (MK) case as a part of the MHA proceedings.

The MK program touched upon many of the same preservation issues presented during the historic landscape workshop. In fact, NPS staff from Denver, Alaska, and Seattle mentioned the important role of MKPS in the preservation of Mineral King. What better place to preserve historic landscape than in a national park?

The Sixth Annual Picnic in the Park: 1992

The theme of the 1992 MKPS picnic focused upon "oldtimers" and their unique contribution to Mineral King history. Like the distinguished guests who addressed our gathering, this annual affair is improving with age.

Three special MKPS members, Esther Peck, Henry Brown, and Van Dixon shared more than two cumulative centuries of experience in the MK environs. The session was lively and entertaining, often tugging nostalgically at the hearts of those who remember the "good old days" at Mineral King. We salute all our treasured oldtimers and... thanks for the memories.

The program also featured an informative talk by Dave Parsons, Research Director of Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks. Dr. Parsons explained how decisions are reached relating to management of California's sequoia groves. Thanks, Dave, for sharing your expertise.

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FROM THE HISTORIAN'S DESK

By John F. Elliott

Greetings to the Mineral King community. This year will be one of many firsts including the initial submittal of a formal nomination of the Mineral King Historic District. We also hope to have the first of the MKPS publication series in time for distribution at the annual July picnic.

I would also like to announce a long-awaited change of address. Please direct your historical correspondence to John F. Elliott (MKPS Historian), P.O. Box 728, Three Rivers, CA 93271 or phone/fax (209) 561-4843.

Most likely we will have snow at Mineral King throughout the summer. To date, no damage to any structure has been reported in the Mineral King Valley. It seems somehow appropriate that this season the high country will be especially alive with the splendor of snow, water, and wildflowers!

Incredible as it may seem, the 1993 Annual Picnic (mark your calendar for July 24th) will be the seventh. How the years fly by! Ora Kay Peterson has planned another great program about one of several historic properties being investigated as components of the National Register (NR) project.

The 1993 program will feature the history of the discovery claim of Mineral King, that is, the mining complex which developed in the vicinity of Mineral Monument No. 1. The place has been known since the 1870s as "White Chief." For more on this interesting topic see the section on the history of White Chief.

The current work on the NR Multiple Properties Documentation (MPD) project is progressing. The boundaries of the Mineral King Historic District have been refined so as to expedite the "preliminary determination of eligibility." The first submittal will include information on historic properties relating to mining, early trails, the Mineral King Road, and the cabins.

Thanks to all who have sent information to update cabin files. If you have not as yet responded, there is always time to fill in the blanks. Many new items have come to light, especially obscure historic cabin names which are integral to evaluating significance. Keep your cards and letters coming.

Did you know that the first miners who entered Mineral King from the south came via White Chief Canyon? ... or that the present Timber Gap trail incorporates a portion of the old Deer Canyon trail developed by the military in the 1890s to reach Giant Forest? Perhaps you know the whereabouts of the Cedar Point or the Loop Mines? The preceding facts are a sample of some of the information being developed as a result of the MPD project.

Plans are in the works to share data on MK history with a mixed-media program and round table session. The first of the series will be held in Visalia. The program will include a showing of the MK segment filmed for the PBS-Fresno show **San Joaquin Illustrated**. Kudos to the show's host John Crancer who diligently pursued the MK story to ensure an accurate portrayal of the mining era.

The documentary aired on KPVT (Ch. 18) on April 1st and 3rd. If you missed it and would like to see a VHS copy, contact MKPS via Ora Kay Peterson (209) 734-6150.

Again, I would also like to personally thank those members who have supported the MKPS research program. It would never have been possible without your ongoing support.

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ARCHITECTURALLY SPEAKING

By Sheryl N. Hack

Hello, MKPS members. The year 1993 also marks a number of firsts for me. In May, I will be moving from Berkeley to New Hampshire to start a new job as curator of historic buildings at the Canterbury Shaker Village.

I will continue to serve as the MKPS architectural historian though regrettably my MK time will be at a premium. I am planning to be in residence at the Crowley cabin during the first week of August.

I will be completing my assignment relative to the MK nomination during the coming season. To date, architectural research has supported the premise that indeed the MK cabins "embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, and method of construction" necessary to meeting NR architectural criteria.

Three key factors influenced the stylistic and formal development of the MK cabin: 1) the nature of available local materials; 2) the harsh conditions of the Sierra Nevada winters; and 3) the design form established by the prospectors who first built cabins in the Mineral King Valley in the 1870s.

EMK 19

An edited version of the architectural findings compiled for the MPD project will be presented in an upcoming MKPS publication. Stay tuned for more on how you may obtain a copy of this compendium of MK historic information.

Have a safe and happy summer. Please address correspondence to me c/o Elliott Research Associates, P.O. Box 728, Three Rivers, CA 93271.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS

MKPS tees and sweat shirts were a huge success in 1992... and there are still a few in stock. The 1992 inventory is now being offered at clearance prices. These shirts are always in style and, remember, a portion of each sale supports the MKPS general fund.

A new 1993 style designed by Jana Botkin of **Cabinart** is in the works for the July picnic. The new shirts will feature more cabins similar in design to the 1992 version. Be sure to collect at least one of each in what promises to become a valuable collectible.

All MKPS merchandise may be purchased by mail. To order the 1992 shirts or reserve a 1993 style, please direct all inquiries to:

MKPS Shirts
2936 S. West St
Visalia, CA 93277
For more information call (209) 734-6150.

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THE MYSTERY AND HISTORY OF WHITE CHIEF

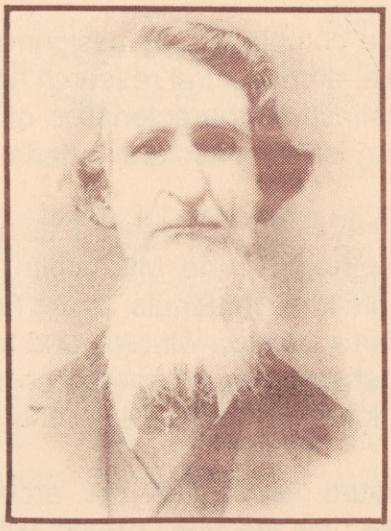
In past newsletters, information was featured in this space drawn from the extensive cabin files of the MKPS archives. In this issue we would like to share some of the information on the White Chief mining property.

Much of the mystery of the area is believed to have originated with the story of how the location of White Chief mountain was revealed to James A. Crabtree. Crabtree, from Porterville, was a devout spiritualist and veteran prospector of the White River diggings. In company of his partners, Belden and Loup, Crabtree told of a startling experience which occurred while the trio were camped on the Little Kern in 1872.

[There are several versions of the tale including one handed down among the Crabtrees which states that an Indian guide took them to the canyon to find lead to cast bullets. The Belden version stated that the image was that of an Indian maiden.]

A vision or spirit of a giant white Indian chief appeared to the men on a moonlit August night. The chief pointed northward and, in a soft voice, told them of a sacred place where the mountains shone with the color of many minerals. Following the lead of the chief, the astonished party soon found themselves in a large circular canyon.

As the sun rose, the great white chief vanished with a sudden upward thrust. Crabtree and his partners were convinced that this must be the place where they would strike it rich. One thing was certain, the grand amphitheater was beautiful beyond compare. The bewildered prospectors named the place "White Chief."



James A. Crabtree
(Courtesy of Edwards Studio)
Porterville, CA

The Crabtree discovery led to the filing of several claims in the immediate vicinity. According to Orlando Barton, James Morgan, a Comstock promoter, "bonded" the "Second extension north" (Loup Claim) on the White Chief for $300,000. He negotiated directly with James Crabtree. Crabtree retained a percentage of the property as a part of the deal.

This transaction was central to the organization of Morgan's New England Tunnel and Smelting Company. The company, after constructing a sawmill, smelter, and several other buildings, commenced operations in 1876. Their crew of 70 men included 40 Chinese laborers.

In 1879, two separate mining claims were patented in the White Chief area. The 200-foot tunnel known today as the White Chief Mine was initially described as the "Loop Mine." Today, these patented claims remain as the only private land (20.65 acres) in the White Chief Bowl.

Of course, any locale with the majesty of Mineral King will have its share of colorful legends and folklore. A legend, though unverifiable, is widely believed and therefore usually contains elements of truth.

The mystery of the White Chief area, according to at least one writer, Gaynell Brooks (sister of Esther Peck), is rooted in Native American tradition. Long before the coming of the white man, tribal groups from the valley and desert were familiar with the headwaters of the Kern and Kaweah Rivers.

In an article entitled "The Legend of White Chief," Gaynell Brooks, wife of a NPS ranger, revealed some of the interesting Indian folklore. Published in a Three Rivers newspaper in 1973, a number of the Mineral King place names are explained as being of Indian origin handed down through many generations.

The Bearskin Glacier was named for Chief Bearskin; beloved by his people as both chief and friend. Lars succeeded Bearskin as chief. Lars was a white man with light hair who had been shipwrecked and somehow had wandered into the Kaweah country. He eventually won the confidence of the Indians, married Bearskin's daughter, and assumed the name "White Chief."

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White Chief and his loving wife Pale Moon were buried on White Chief Mountain. In honor of their chief, the braves of the tribe made a monument. They went to the top of the mountain and with their crude tools they chiseled a face with a neck and chin to the north; the top of the head with chief's headdress to the south.

That was their chief and they wanted him to dwell forever in their sight. To this day, the mines of the mountain, initially worked by the Indians, were named "White Chief Mines."

Today, the "monument" is still visible especially in the morning light. Whether one believes that the stone figure is indeed the effigy of White Chief, there is an eerie spiritual quality about the landscape.

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For a complete copy of the Gaynell Brooks article, the reader is directed to the files of the Tulare County Library. Portions have been excerpted here to whet your curiosity about yet another facet of MK history.

The **Seventh Annual Picnic in the Park** will feature "The Mystery and History of White Chief." The distinguished guest speaker will be Mr. William "Bill" Womack of Springville. Bill is a Crabtree descendant (great-great grandson of James Crabtree) and former owner of the White Chief mine. Bill did assessment work on the family claim as recently as the 1960s. Bill's talk is sure to kindle one spirit or another and shed some light on the mysterious White Chief.

Make certain to reserve Saturday July 24 for this historic yearly gathering. Festivities commence at 12:30 p.m. sharp at the old Sunny Point campground site. See you there.

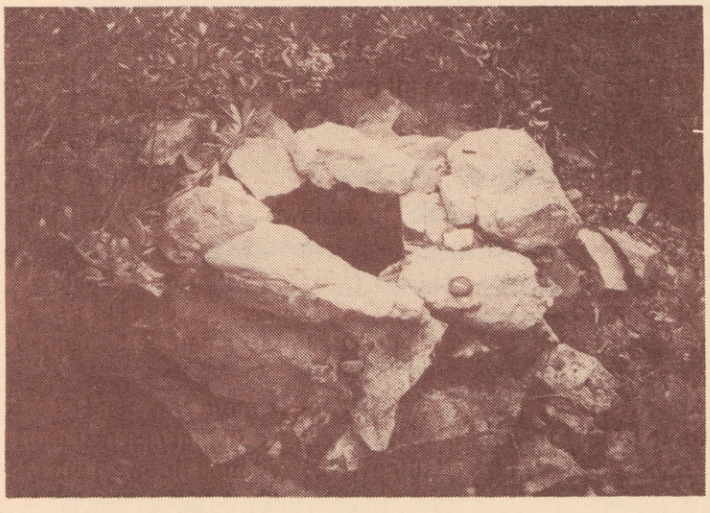
UPDATE:

Mineral King Historic District

In July 1992, MKPS embarked upon an ambitious multiple properties documentation (MPD) contract as a step towards the creation of the Mineral King Historic District.

The comprehensive MPD document, scheduled for submittal in 1993, will be accompanied by a formal request for a "preliminary determination of eligibility." The MKPS nomination project is certain to set a precedent in the administration of federal lands/historical properties.

To date, the current contract has been funded entirely by MKPS, with the majority share being donated in response to a personal appeal by Van Dixon, Life Member of MKPS. Van is deserving of special commendation for his effort above and beyond the call of duty. A special thanks to all who sent donations earmarked for the NR nomination project.



This mining monument is the type commonly used in the Mineral King District. A tobacco can was placed inside the cairn which contained the paperwork delineating ownership and boundaries.

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1993 MEMBERSHIP DUES

If you have not done so already... the time is now to send in your renewal for 1993. Have you recently moved or had a change of area code? Please furnish MKPS with the updated information.

For more information MKPS may be reached by calling (209) 734-6150. Remember your support is vital to meeting the goals of our 1993 preservation agenda. Funds are used for worthwhile projects like the MPD program, historic restoration and maintenance, and the curation of exhibits and archives. Send in your check today!

MEMORIALS

MKPS is grateful for contributions in memory of loved ones. If you would like to contribute to an existing memorial, or establish a new one, please indicate preference on the enclosed Membership Form.

MEMORIALS

Mineral King Preservation Society

Archer, Eunice
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Becker, Richard
Bissiri, Attilio
Boswell, Gene
Bree, John Hyler
Breeze, Richard
Buckman, Ray & Gem
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Cochrun, George & Bea
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Freeman, Carl
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Given, W.B.
Godsey, Robert
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Devol, Nicole
Devol, Randy
Devol, Sharon M.
Devol, Shirley
Dixon, Evander
Dobson, Edward Brown
Doctor, Joseph E.
Hastrup, Louise
Hicks, Bob
Livermore, Jr., Norman B.
Martin, Helen L.
Mitchell, Annie
Sweet, Ardeen
Tavares, Kathy
Tavares, Trevor

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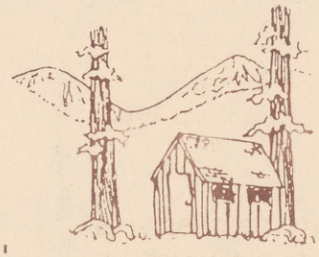

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President: Wm. Martin
Vice President: Jim Barton
Treasurer: Stoney Savage
Membership: Alan George
Executive Director: Ora Kay Peterson

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Adults who might like to belong: _____

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_____ Renewal

_____ Please send a Membership Card

Individual	$ 15.00
Couple	25.00
Family (Spouse & Minor Children)	40.00
Life - Individual	250.00
Couple	400.00
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Multiple Properties Documentation Amount $ _____

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Donor's Name: _____

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MAIL TO: MKPS
2936 South West Street
Visalia, CA 93277

(Make checks payable to MKPS)

Information: Ora Kay Peterson
(209) 734-6150

CONTRIBUTIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE UNDER 501 (a) IRS, ID #77-0174309

Cut here and mail to MKPS, 2936 South West Street, Visalia, CA 93277

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SEVENTH ANNUAL " PICNIC IN THE PARK "

Date: Saturday, July 24, 1993

Time: 12:30 P.M.

Place: Mineral King Valley

Bring: Picnic lunch, folding chair, or blanket... lemonade and cookies will be furnished.

Program: "The Mystery and History of White Chief"

Speaker: William "Bill" Womack (Crabtree/White Chief historian)

The "Picnic in the Park" in July.

MINERAL KING PRESERVATION SOCIETY
c/o Ora Kay Peterson
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